



Graham County Board of County Commissioners

Dale Wiggins
Chairman

12 North Main Street
Robbinsville, NC 28771

Lynn Cody
Vice-Chairman

Keith Eller
Member

Phone: 828-479-7961
Fax: 828-479-7988

Jacob Nelms
Member

Connie Orr
Member

Rebecca (Becky) Garland
County Manager

Kim Crisp
Clerk

August 26, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The Graham County Board of Commissioners strongly give their full support to Representative Kevin Corbin for House Bill 655 "An Act to provide Health Coverage to Residents of North Carolina under the NC Health Care for Working Families Program and to establish the North Carolina Rural Access to Healthcare Grant Program".

The Graham County Board of Commissioners understand that the majority of uninsured individuals in North Carolina are employed but do not make enough money to afford health insurance coverage.

Upon a majority vote of the Graham County Board of Commissioners, we unanimously agree with the NC Health Care for Working Families House Bill 655.

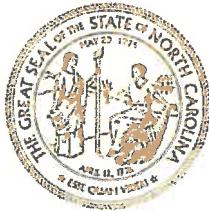
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale E. Wiggins".

Dale E. Wiggins
Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim Crisp".

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

August 27, 2019

Dale Wiggins, Chairman of the Board
Graham County Board of Commissioners
134 Wiggins Road
Robbinsville, NC 28771

Dear Chairman Wiggins:

When I vetoed the General Assembly's conference budget in June, I was in pursuit of a better deal for North Carolinians. I wanted to see Medicaid expanded, I wanted to see better salary increases for teachers and non-certified school personnel. And I wanted to see certainty in rebuilding the public schools.

That's why 50 days ago, I proposed a compromise budget that would better benefit your county. Yes, my compromise proposal would expand Medicaid, but it would also increase teacher pay by an average of 8.5%, including a pay raise for every teacher. It also included at least double and in some instances more than double the pay raises for university, community college, and non-certified public school employees. It would include the first statewide bond referendum to build public schools in nearly a quarter-century. And it would still fund every single local project, including your county's, included in the General Assembly conference budget.

To date, the General Assembly leadership has not overridden my veto, nor have they sent me a counteroffer.

The bottom line is that your county would gain significantly more under my proposed compromise. I encourage you to reach out to your legislators and tell them how much your community needs this legislature to do its job, and to work with me to negotiate and pass a responsible budget that works for all North Carolinians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cooper".

Roy Cooper



NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATOR PHILIP E. BERGER
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
NORTH CAROLINA SENATE

September 10, 2019

Chairman of the Board Dale Wiggins
Graham County
134 Wiggins Road
Robbinsville, NC 28771

Dear Chairman of the Board Wiggins,

I had no intention of writing to you because I think it's unfair to use anybody as a pawn in a political fight, but I understand that you have received a letter from Governor Cooper that doesn't provide all of the facts about the ongoing budget impasse. Unfortunately, I don't know of a way to clear the air other than writing to you myself, so here we are.

74 days ago, Governor Cooper vetoed a balanced, bipartisan budget because it did not expand Medicaid.

Medicaid expansion has busted budgets in other states, and studies show that Medicaid is an inefficient and ineffective government program that fails to improve health outcomes. Regardless of my opinion, though, this single policy disagreement should not hold up the entire budget.

Republicans have enacted sound fiscal policies since 2011 that have helped create a boom decade for North Carolina. We should continue what's working, not return to the failed tax-and-spend policies that created a fiscal disaster in this state.

Thankfully, there is no government shutdown during this impasse because the legislature passed a bill a few years ago that continues funding at the previous year's spending level if there is no new budget in place at the start of a new fiscal year. Since the vital functions of state government are moving forward, one option is to hold off on the items Governor Cooper is blocking and take them up again next year. This is not the approach we want to take as it likely means that some or all of the one-time appropriations and capital funding for schools, community colleges, universities, state government, and local projects won't be enacted into law this year. These are all items the General Assembly has already passed and that Governor Cooper says he supports, but he continues to hold them hostage to try to force the legislature to expand Medicaid.

Regardless of our disagreements on that one issue, we believe we can and should move forward on passing a new budget. After all, a single-issue ultimatum that blocks a \$24 billion budget is not responsible governance.

I encourage you to contact Governor Cooper and tell him to drop his single-issue ultimatum and support the budget passed by the General Assembly to ensure the vital funding for education and local projects contained in the bipartisan budget does not fall victim to his Medicaid-or-nothing demands.

Sincerely,
A handwritten signature of Senator Phil Berger in black ink.
Senator Phil Berger



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September 16, 2019

Senator Philip E. Berger
President Pro Tempore
2007 Legislative Building
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

Dear Senator Berger,

I'm not sure why you feel like writing me would be using me as a political pawn based on some letter that I might have received from Governor Cooper but I can assure you that I won't be nor will my fellow commissioners be used as a pawn by anyone. I/we get mail frequently from different government agencies and on occasion from the Governor's office as well. I am going to assume that the subject matter you refer to is Graham County's support of our representative Kevin Corbin's effort to pass legislation to expand Medicaid. The Board of Commissioners for Graham County offered our support to Representative Corbin and his effort to do just that. Nothing more. We feel that it is past due to expand Medicaid in our state.

Here in Graham County Senator, we are accustomed to being ignored by not only the governor but by our legislature as well. We are a very rural county that has a small taxable amount of property that is trying to survive in the 21st century and provide the necessary services to our citizens. What we've grown to expect from our legislature is declining state funding and increased local funding in particular to any social program. We supported Medicaid expansion because our citizens need it. Did you know Senator that our poverty level is near 30%? Did you know that we have several hundred working adults with no means to have health care? You might be surprised to learn that our five-member board of commissioners is made up of four Republicans and one Democrat member. We don't have the luxury of doing things based on some national political party's stance on some issue. The people we serve are our neighbors

and friends. Were you to come visit us Senator I could show you working moms and dads at fast food restaurants or construction workers and other gainfully employed citizens who don't have health insurance. They can't afford it. Graham County Government provides coverage to all our employees and that costs the taxpayers over \$700 per employee per month. That's a group price. For an individual to get comparable coverage outside a group that cost would almost double. We don't have the best insurance either. We have high deductibles. A lot of our employees never meet the deductible during the calendar year.

If you'll allow me Senator I want to give you a brief example of how we are ignored by the legislature. In our County, we now have an economy that is tourism driven with jobs in the tourism industry being our largest employment sector. In our County, we have three recognized towns. Within those Township's the Occupancy Tax that is collected for hotel rooms is 6%. For the remainder of the county the Occupancy Tax is 3%. We have asked the Legislature for three (3) consecutive years to increase the county rate to 6% to make the rate even across the county. This year our representative Kevin Corbin once again introduced a local bill to do just that. This session the House passed that bill by a vote of 100 for 10 against if I remember correctly. Then that bill moved over to the Senate side where it was pronounced DOA by Senator Ralph Hise. Why? What difference could it possibly make to the Legislature if we had a Occupancy Tax that was level across the county? We need the additional revenue that small increase would create to market our tourism attractions and create tourism infrastructure. We've written letters to numerous parties asking them to help but they fall on deaf ears. Can you explain why it would make any difference to you or any other Senator? We want to be able to provide the necessary services for our citizens. Things like dependable ambulance and EMS services; a well-equipped and funded Sheriff's Department; better education for our children and grandchildren. We want to provide all those things that the wealthy counties provide their citizens. In order for us to do that we have effectively attract more and more visitors and hope they spend more money while they are here so that our sales tax revenue will be greater.

We have no manufacturing in Graham County anymore. The closest thing we have is one small sawmill that employs around 20 people. They struggle to keep running due to the US Forest Service owning over 68% of the land here and their management practices that have almost eliminated logging on USFS lands. We were told by a District Ranger over a year ago there'd be no more timber sales in Graham County for five (5) years! The owner of the sawmill told me himself that when he finishes logging some land he owns he has no other sources for timber. That means that without some influx of timber that his mill will one day close

In closing Senator, while some politicians like to operate as "one size fits all" that approach doesn't fit rural NC. I can show you the same problems we have in every western county. Graham just happens to be the poorest of these western counties. We have poor internet services; poor cell service; and in the 21st Century we don't even have dependable landline telephone service. We've been waiting on a four-lane highway for over 50 years and now told

by DOT it will just be a 2 lane road. So, you'll forgive us when we seem skeptical of anything or anyone connected to state or federal government.

You know Senator Berger for some people who have good paying jobs and good health insurance it is easy to say that those without health insurance just need to go to work isn't it? The reality is in places like Graham County those people are working. A mom or dad working at McDonald's or Wendy's for just over minimum wage cannot afford \$1500 a month for insurance. Representative Corbin's bill was a good effort to correct that. I am sorry that you don't agree.

Sincerely,



Dale E. Wiggins

Chairman Graham County Board of Commissioners